

# THE GRIFFIN NEWSLETTER

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Please email news items to the editor.

## SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING

SATURDAY 18 JUNE 2016

JOIN US IN CHICAGO'S BEVERLY NEIGHBORHOOD  
AND NEARBY BLUE ISLAND!

*Here are important details for the seventeenth annual meeting of the Walter Burley Griffin Society of America, to be held on Saturday, 18 June:*

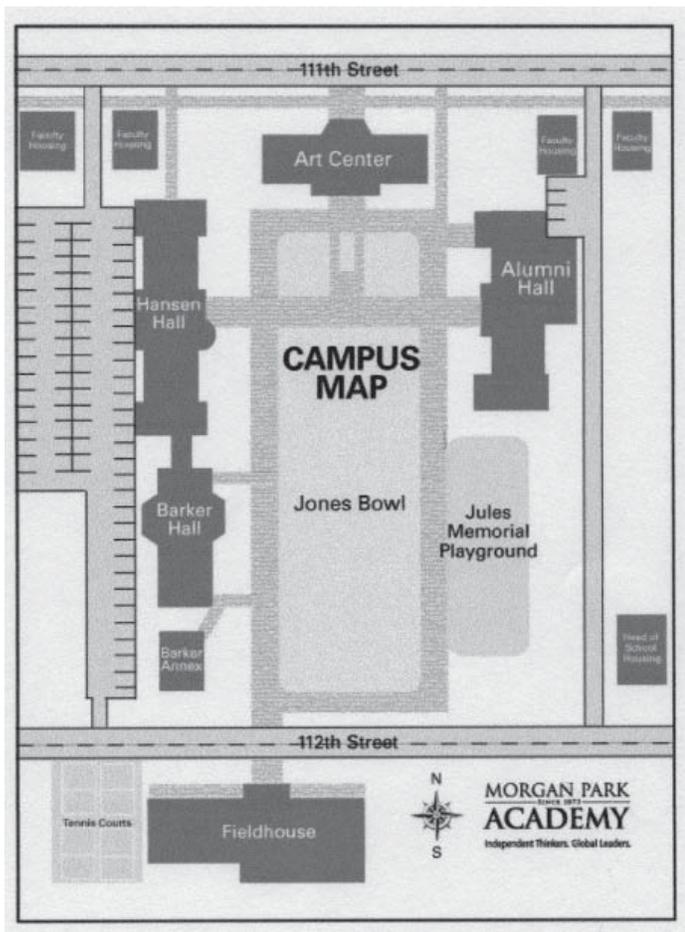
**MEETING:** The meeting will begin promptly at 9:00 AM on Saturday morning in the Art Center of the Morgan Park Academy at 2153 W. 111th Street, Chicago, 60643. The building will be open at 8:00 and we urge everyone to arrive by 8:30. You may park in the lot on the west side of the Academy campus [see map]. Morning lectures will take place in this space, which we have reserved from 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Topics will include Griffin's low-cost housing; the Society's effort to encourage preservation of Griffin's Sloane house in Elmhurst; Chris Enck's amazing project to move Van Bergen's Irving House, formerly in Wilmette; and an examination of Griffin and Wright's architectural ornament and its relationship with so-called Art Deco by Robert Brueggemann, Professor Emeritus of the University of Illinois at Chicago.

**LUNCH & TOURS:** Box lunches will be delivered to the Art Center at noon. From 12:30 to 5:00 we will be visiting a selection of houses in Chicago's Beverly and Morgan Park neighborhoods and the nearby village of Blue Island. These include houses by Griffin, Wright, and Maher, as well as a cross-section of the work of Robert Seyfarth and even a fabulous house by Bertram Goldberg.

**SUNDAY TOUR:** The Society is offering a tour of the William Sloane house in Elmhurst at 248 Arlinton on Sunday morning. As we will learn about on Saturday morning, the Society is sponsoring the writing of a National Register nomination of the house and possible donation of a preservation easement to assist in keeping this important house viable for many years to come.

**ACCOMMODATIONS:** A block of rooms has been reserved at the Hilton Oak Lawn, 9333 S. Cicero Ave., Oak Lawn, 60453, for the nights of Friday and Saturday, 17 and 18 June, under the name of the Walter Burley Griffin Society. Reservations should be made directly with the hotel at 800-315-1058. The hotel is located a few miles west of Beverly just north of 95th Street.

The REGISTRATION FORM is enclosed in this newsletter. Please fill it out, indicating your choice of sandwich and beverage for lunch, and return it to the Griffin Society's headquarters. The cost will be \$15 for the Saturday meeting and tours, \$10 for the box lunch and, of course, registrants must also have paid their annual dues of \$25 to the Society.



Campus Map of Morgan Park Academy. The Art Center, the location of Saturday's morning session, is at top center. Parking is to the left (west) of Hansen and Barker halls.

## SOCIETY GIVES GRANT FOR THE SLOANE HOUSE

The Griffin Society has awarded a grant to Lois Jones, owner of the William Sloane house in Elmhurst, for the purpose of hiring a professional preservationist to write a National Register form for the house and see it through the nomination process. Lois is dedicated to helping to ensure that the house remains intact and to that end is considering giving a preservation easement. However, the house has never been listed on the National Register, a prerequisite to such a donation. The Griffin Board agreed to cover the cost of preparing the form and, after consultation with preservationists and in accord with Lois Jones' wishes, hired John Waters of Chicago to write the form. As of press time, he has completed a first draft and expects to present the building to the Illinois Historic Sites Advisory Council at their October meeting. John has just completed a similar, though much more extensive, project for Rock Crest/Rock Glen in Mason City. Although listed on the Register in the 1970s, the Mason City application was deemed

insufficiently argued to merit its potential as a National Historic Landmark. With the help of the Griffin Society's recent book *Rock Crest/Rock Glen, Mason City, Iowa: The American Masterwork of Marion M. and Walter B. Griffin*, John was able to make the case for the national significance of this important site, preparing the way for its later listing as a National Historic Landmark.



William Sloane house, 1909, Elmhurst. Photo by Paul Kruty.

## HOUSE UPDATES

### *Miscellaneous news of Mahony/Griffin Buildings*

ADOLPH MUELLER HOUSE, Decatur, Illinois. Patrick White, President of Millikin University, has fully moved into the Mahony's glorious Mueller house, acquired by the University in 2014. In February, President White hosted the school's trustees for a dinner party at the mansion, after which Paul Kruty explained the significance of the building and the importance of shepherding it through its next century. Joining the Ricker house in Grinnell, Iowa, the Mueller house becomes the second Mahony/Griffin masterpiece to come under the care of an educational institution.

GILBERT COOLEY HOUSE, Monroe, Louisiana. Dan and Jill Kaiser of Grinnell toured with Doug Breckenridge, newly-elected president of the board of directors of the Cooley Foundation. They reported that although there is still much work ahead, the house remains a stunning example of Griffin's work. Doug reported that the Cooley Foundation now has two committees—Strategic Planning and Public Outreach—whose purposes are to reinvigorate the continuing restoration and development of the Cooley house. He is happy to get any advice from Griffin Society members

JENKS SUMMER HOUSE, Elkhorn, Wisconsin. The auction of the property did not take place last

December as scheduled “due to title issues,” according to one of the interested parties, who further noted that, when the issues are resolved, the family hopes “to find someone to buy the place who recognizes and will nurture its architectural significance.”

**SAM SCHNEIDER HOUSE**, Mason City, Iowa. Paul Ringstrom reports that the Schneider house in Rock Glen, the last house on State Street at the creek and across from the Stockman house, has been sold. Damaged in several floods, it had stood vacant for several years. Tremendous news, and what a relief! Bob McCoy adds that the new owners will make a worthy addition to the Rock Glen community as they begin the necessary restoration work on the house.

**ARTHUR RULE HOUSE**, Mason City, Iowa. Bob McCoy further reports that the Rule house on the northwest corner of Rock Glen, long the home of Vice Admiral Norman Ray and his wife, has also been sold recently to sympathetic buyers. Elegantly maintained in perfect condition by the Rays, this beautiful building will need only the care that a well-kept centenarian might expect to receive.

## MEMORIALS

### *Terri Zusag*

The Society lost a friend in Theresa “Terri” Zusag, owner of Griffin’s Emery house in Elmhurst, who passed away last October at age 66. Following the spectacular restoration and addition to the house by preservation architect John Eifler, Terri and her children, Zachary and Kendra, were always generous in showing the house to a variety of visitors, including grateful members of the Walter Burley Griffin Society.

### *Mark Peisch*

The Society wishes belatedly to report the passing of Mark Lyons Peisch (1921-2014), one of the first Griffin scholars, whose dissertation and book, *The Chicago School of Architecture: Early Followers of Sullivan and Wright*, published by Random House in 1964, paid particular attention to Griffin and Canberra. The book’s very title captured the reality of the movement as it was known to its original practitioners, before Carl Condit appropriated that term for Chicago’s tall buildings of the 1880s and ‘90s and Allen Brooks invented a new one in the Prairie School. Although Mark’s subsequent academic career was devoted primarily to administration, he was an avid follower of developments in the scholarship of Griffin and the Prairie School. He was a special guest at the symposium held at the University of Illinois in 1997, deliv-

ering a delightful talk providing an insider’s perspective about interviews with Marion Griffin, John Van Bergen, Roy Lippincott, Wright’s sister Maginel, and of course Wright himself. After more than fifty years, Mark’s book remains a “must-have” in the library of every student of Wright, the Prairie School, American and Modern architecture. And the significance of Walter Burley Griffin.



Mark Peisch with Anne Watson, Australian curator of the Powerhouse exhibition *Beyond Architecture*, attending the Griffin symposium at the University of Illinois in 1997.

## WRIGHT and GRIFFIN

In two new excellent books on Wright and on organic architecture, Griffin is mentioned in passing merely as a “draftsman” for Wright. Neil Levine states that “Griffin was hired by Wright as a draftsman in June 1901,” n. 49, p. 394, in *The Urbanism of Frank Lloyd Wright* (Princeton University Press, 2016); and Jane King Hession and Tim Quigley note in *John H. Howe, Architect* (University of Minnesota Press, 2015), p. 14, that Howe was influenced by Evanston examples of “progressive architecture” by, among others, “Walter Burley Griffin (a former Wright draftsman).” The reality is that when Griffin began working in Wright’s office, he was a licensed architect with a professional degree and two years’ prior drafting experience. He joined Wright’s office as what we would today term a “junior partner.” Calling him a draftsman is like saying that Stanford White was just a draftsman for H. H. Richardson or that Kevin Roche merely drafted for Eero Saarinen. In addition, Griffin was working for Webster Tomlinson at the time (January 1901) that Tomlinson and Wright became professional partners, hence he was already in a position to contribute to Wright’s practice by early 1901.

## PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

### ON FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT'S CONCRETE ADOBE: IRVING GILL, RUDOLPH SCHINDLER AND THE AMERICAN SOUTHWEST

By *Donald Leslie Johnson*

Published by Ashgate Publishing Company, Farnham, Surrey, England, 2013

230 pp, 52 b&w images.

ISBN: 978-1-4094-2317-6

Distinguished Griffin and Wright scholar Donald Leslie Johnson, author of *The Architecture of Walter Burley Griffin* (1977), continues to produce a steady stream of scholarly books on Wright and his colleagues, associates, and nemeses. As part of this account of Wright's California concrete block houses in the context of American modern architecture of the 1920s, Johnson includes the strange tale of Australian critic and amateur urbanist, George Taylor. Taylor's initial support for the Griffins vanished, and under the influence of Wright, he eventually mounted vociferous attacks on the Griffins. Johnson also includes a lucid examination of Griffin's knit-lock system of concrete block construction and its apparent influence on Wright's own concrete block buildings.

### WALTER BURLEY GRIFFIN: THE ARCHITECTURE OF NEWMAN COLLEGE

By *Dr. Jeffrey Turnbull*

e-book available at:

[issuu.com/walterburleygriffinnewman/docs/walter\\_burley\\_griffin\\_-\\_the\\_archite/0](http://issuu.com/walterburleygriffinnewman/docs/walter_burley_griffin_-_the_archite/0)

Architect, scholar and teacher Jeffrey Turnbull of the Faculty of Architecture Building and Planning, University of Melbourne, completed this monumental, monographic examination of Griffin's Newman College, the residential college for Catholic students at the University of Melbourne, in 2004. Last year the revised text and illustrations were put online, with the official launch taking place on July 6th. James Weirick noted that "it's great to have the history of the New College commission readily available." Jeff reports that one year after putting his dissertation online, there were over 45,000 "impressions" and more than 2600 "reads."

### LATEST GRIFFIN SOCIETY PUBLICATION

AVAILABLE:

#### ROCK CREST/ROCK GLEN MONOGRAPH

The Griffin Society's third book on the Griffins, available on the Society's website, [wbgriffinsociety.org](http://wbgriffinsociety.org), is the first monograph devoted to the internationally

significant site in Mason City. Titled *Rock Crest/Rock Glen, Mason City, Iowa: The American Masterwork of Marion M. and Walter B. Griffin*, it features essays by Dr. Robert E. McCoy, Prof. Paul Kruty, Prof. Paul E. Sprague, and Prof. James Weirick covering the social context of the Griffins' work in Mason City, the architectural context of the project in their careers, a closer look at each of the buildings, and a summation of the accomplishment at Mason City in relation to Canberra before it and Castlecrag afterwards. Drawing on unpublished photographs, documents and drawings from the Griffins' office only recently made available at the Australian National Library in Canberra, and supplemented with a host of original sources from a variety of American archives, the four authors examine this amazing development from contrasting points of view. At 180 pages, with 177 black-and-white and 39 color illustrations, the book sells for \$35. To order a copy, see our website, [wbgriffinsociety.org](http://wbgriffinsociety.org).

### MEMBERSHIP

The Walter Burley Griffin Society of America is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt corporation under IRS Code 501 (c)(3). We invite you to become a Friend of the Society. For annual dues of \$25.00, you will receive a periodic newsletter keeping you abreast of the Society's activities, such as lectures, tours, exhibitions, and other events related to the Griffins' work. (\$20.00 for seniors 65 and older.)

The Society seeks comments, advice, suggestions, and news from you, its friends. The Society needs your financial support. All donations are tax-deductible.

If you wish to join the Society or renew your membership in the Society, please fill out the following form and mail it to us at the address below - or email us that you are attending the Annual Meeting and you can pay for both membership and meeting at that time.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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